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C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 001616

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV
COMMERCE FOR ITA JEAN KELLY
TREASURY FOR OASIA JEFF NEIL
USPACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: SPDC MUM ON SUCCESSFUL THAI "ROAD MAP" FORUM

REF: A. TOKYO 8048

[1](#)B. RANGOON 1057 (NOTAL)

Classified By: CDA a.i. Ron McMullen for Reasons 1.5 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) A multilateral meeting on Burma, held December 15th in Bangkok, appears to have been a political victory for Burma's ruling regime. Readouts of the meeting from Tokyo (ref A), Washington, and Bangkok indicate that there were some tough questions put to the Burmese representative, Foreign Minister Win Aung, but that the event was largely stage-managed to ensure maximum comfort for the Burmese representative. For instance, supposedly all invitations to the event were first submitted to the Burmese government for veto. By all accounts, FM Win Aung was able to blow off the tough questions but was given full rein to blow smoke on the country's "uniquely" troubled history, the status of Aung San Suu Kyi's (ASSK) detention and her participation in the pending National Constitutional Convention, and to "explain" Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt's 7-step "road map to democracy" (explored in detail in ref B).

[1](#)2. (C) Intentionally or not, this event will likely prove to be another shoulder chuck to the Burmese junta in its surprisingly successful campaign to bolster its international relations in the wake of its attack on ASSK in late May and the imposition of new U.S. sanctions in July and August. The GOB's success winning over its neighbors and, eventually, ASEAN are well documented. However, the attendance at the event of several non-Asian countries that have been critical of the regime's human rights abuses will give new confidence to the regime that it now has international, not just ASEAN, "understanding" ("support" is a luxury, not a necessity) to pursue the PM's "road map" at its own pace, in its own way, without undue pressure from abroad. The GOB noted in a December 17 "information" sheet, responding to public U.S. skepticism of the "road map" process, that "Support for the National Convention is strong in Myanmar, in the region, and even among groups which have long been opposed to the current government."

[1](#)3. (C) Other than this retort, there has been no announcement or briefing by the Burmese government on the Thai forum's outcome. More surprisingly, there have been no propaganda pieces yet in the government's mouthpiece "The New Light of Myanmar," though the December 18 edition of the semi-independent "Myanmar Times" included an article and photo from the Bangkok meeting. In contrast, there was significant coverage in the "New Light" of PM Khin Nyunt's visit to Japan for the Japan-ASEAN summit meeting on December 11-12, including several reprints of a smiley Khin Nyunt shaking hands with Japanese PM Koizumi.

McMullen